

Prayers and Reflections

OPENING PRAYER

God of life,
 You create an abundant world
 and promise enough for all.
 Yet we betray You
 as hunger and poverty thrive in our midst.
 Help us to trust Your promise,
 to believe that what seems impossible
 is possible in You.
 Stir us to rediscover Your Gospel
 as good news for the poor.
 Lead us to act in courage and love,
 so that hope might find a home
 in our communities, our country and our world,
 and that all people
 might join in Your banquet.
 Amen.

REFLECTIONS

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.
 Mark 12: 30-31

...this Council lays stress on reverence for the human person; everyone must consider one's every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus.

Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, #27

Every day, human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family.

Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, #26

CLOSING PRAYER

You have created the human community, O Lord, to flourish as your family. May we remember that the good of every member of your family is your joy and our responsibility. Let us invest ourselves and our resources wisely, with discernment, as a concrete sign of our consent to the Reign of God. You have given us intelligence, carrying hearts, and voices that can join in the debates and discussions about world concerns.

This Valentine's Day, give us also the grace to use these gifts for the good of our sisters and brothers who struggle everyday for food, decent work, and dignity. Remind us that our own dignity is affirmed by our involvement in the lives of our brothers and sisters, that our own joys will be multiplied by our work for justice, and that our spirituality will be deepened and matured by being a part of this great work.

Amen.



Activities

1. Begin the session with the opening prayer on page 1.
2. Next, read the reflections and discuss the following questions:

We are challenged to love our neighbor. Who are our neighbors in a globalized world?

How important is it to you that the Valentine's Day gifts you give to your friends and family do not have any negative impacts on your global neighbors?

3. Write the following words on a piece of newsprint / chalk board:

Valentine's Day
Flowers
Diamonds
Chocolate

Ask group members to call out the associations—words, concepts, images, etc.—that they have with Valentine's Day. List these associations on the newsprint. Do the same with the remaining three words. When everyone has had a chance to share their associations, move on to step 4.

4. Distribute copies of "Case Study: The Flower Industry in Ecuador" (page 3) to group members. Have one group member read the case study aloud. Allow group members to share their initial reactions to the case study. How do your groups' associations with flowers differ from the association that our women neighbors working in the flower industry might have?

5. Distribute copies of "Case Study: Child Slaves on Cocoa Bean Farms" (page 8) to group members. Have one group member read the case study aloud. Allow group members to share their initial reactions to the case study. How do your groups' associations with chocolate differ from the association that young neighbors such as Aly Diabate might have?

6. Distribute copies of "Case Study: Diamonds and Sierra Leone" (page 13) to group members. Have one group member read the case study aloud. Allow group members to share their initial reactions to the case study. How do your groups' associations with diamonds differ from the association that our neighbors living in Sierra Leone might have?

7. As a group, decide which of the topics—diamonds, flowers or chocolate—you will learn more about with the study guides provided. Depending on the time available, your group may choose to learn more about all three. If your group does not have time to do everything for Valentine's Day, the topics can be explored at a later date.

8. After learning about one or more of the issues in this unit, discuss the following:

Catholic Social Teaching on human dignity, the value of persons over goods, and the centrality of the common good contain principles of building a community of good neighbors. We will never meet most of our global neighbors; however, through our purchasing decisions, we can have profound effects on the farmers, workers, communities and ecosystems located thousands of miles away. We can be "good neighbors" by supporting global structures that promote human dignity, and working to change those that do not.

Although sending a box of chocolates or some flowers—or even giving some diamond jewelry—seem like good options for Valentine's day, they may not be. Brainstorm a list of other ways you can show those in your life that you love them. Be creative.

What are some other options for this Valentine's Day that ensure love and justice for all of our global neighbors?

9. End the session with the closing prayer on page 1, or with one of the prayers located in this unit.

Case Study: The Flower Industry in Ecuador

Two flower workers, Soledad, age 32, and Petrona, age 34, are both mothers, and both look jaundiced and bony. In interviews after quitting time, they asked not to be fully identified out of fear that they would lose their \$156-a-month jobs cutting flowers in greenhouses, jobs that have long hours and no benefits and that expose them to dangerous chemicals.

"There is no respect for the fumigation rules," said Petrona, who has worked on flower farms for four years. "They spray the chemicals even while we are working."

"My hair has begun to fall out," she added, running a hand from the top of her visibly receding hairline down a single scruffy braid, "I am young, but I feel very old."

Soledad, who has worked on flower farms for 12 years, slowly turned her head from side to side. "If I move my head any faster, I feel nauseous," she said, and then pulled up her sleeve to show her skeletal limbs. "I have no appetite."

When asked whether the farm where they worked had a doctor on duty, the women rolled their eyes. "He always tells us there is nothing wrong with us and sends us back to work," Petrona said. "He works for the company. He does not help us."

In February 2003, the chief of the Red Cross clinic in the city of Quito, Dr. Toribio Valladares, reported to the *New York Times* that he had seen growing numbers of flower workers with respiratory problems, conjunctivitis, miscarriages and rashes. Like the two women who harvest greenhouse roses, Dr. Valladares voiced deep distrust of doctors who worked on the flower farms.

"When the workers go for help to the doctors on the plantations," he said, "the doctors treat the symptoms but do not examine the workers to try to determine their illnesses. And the doctors always tell them that their illnesses have nothing to do with their work."

Source: "Behind Roses' Beauty, Poor and Ill Workers," *New York Times*, By Ginger Thompson, February 13, 2003

The Flower Industry: Study Guide 1

St. Valentine's Day is the biggest rose event in the U.S., which buys more than 70% of its cut flowers from South America. But as the saying goes, every rose has thorns.

The cut flower industry in Colombia and Ecuador has boomed in recent years due to trade deals with the United States. Most of the roses and carnations now sold in the U.S. come from these two countries. Most of the workers on these farms are women: 70% in Colombia, and 80% in Ecuador.

The flower industry has created hundreds of thousands of jobs—but at what cost?

Labor Rights Abuses in the Flower Industry

- Workers receive poverty-level wages.
- They often work 50-60 hours/week without overtime pay.
- Workers are also unjustly dismissed for trying to organize unions.
 - Of the hundreds of flower companies located in Ecuador, only three have unions.
 - Third-party contracting practices also severely limit freedom of association. The subcontracted workers are shuffled between different companies every few months so that their employers can avoid having to affiliate them with social security, and a constantly changing workforce also inhibits serious attempts at organizing.
- Pregnant women are penalized.
 - Many companies force women to take illegal pregnancy tests before hiring them. They will not hire pregnant women.
 - Many companies simply fire women who become pregnant
- Child labor is a serious problem in the industry.
 - The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 20% of the 60,000 Ecuadorian flower workers are children.
 - Pesticide exposure affects children more severely than adults.

Pesticide Exposure

- Workers are exposed to the toxic mixture of pesticides, fungicides and fumigants that large producers use to grow and export unblemished, pest-free flowers.
 - An ILO survey found that only 22% of Ecuadorian flower companies trained their workers in the safe use of chemicals.
 - Greenhouses are not regularly cleared of people while fumigation is going on.

- Serious health problems have resulted for many of the industry's workers.
 - Two-thirds of Colombian and Ecuadorian flower workers suffer from work-related health problems, including headaches, nausea, impaired vision, conjunctivitis, rashes, asthma, stillbirths, miscarriages, congenital malformations and respiratory and neurological problems.
 - There are greater incidents of birth defects in children whose mothers worked in the flower industry.

Environmental Concerns

- Toxic residues of pesticides have been found in dangerously high levels in groundwater
- Aquifers are falling in some regions in which greenhouses are located; as a result, water must be imported from other parts of the countries.

Flowers and the U.S.

- The United States imports 45% of Ecuador's cut flowers, and 50% of the flowers sold in the U.S. were grown in the Savanna region near Bogotá, Colombia.
- U.S.-based company Dole controls 20% of Colombia's flower exports.
- The International Labor Rights Fund's Campaign urges Dole and major U.S. flower retailers such as Albertson's, Safeway, Costco, and Wal-Mart to pressure their suppliers to respect the rights of their workers by complying with higher standards.

Sources:

Flower Industry Information Sources: "Behind Roses' Beauty, Poor and Ill Workers," *New York Times*, By Ginger Thompson, February 13, 2003; International Labor Rights Fund; *Breaking Boundaries II*, U.S. Gender and Trade Network, 2004



The Flower Industry: Study Guide 2

As the major importer of Colombian and Ecuadorian cut flowers, American consumers are in a unique position to be able to press for better working conditions in the industry.

The International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF) Fairness in Flowers Campaign

The ILRF is a Washington-based non-governmental organization, which has a Fairness in Flowers Campaign. The Campaign raises awareness in the U.S. about labor rights violations and health and safety problems in the cut flower industry in Ecuador and Colombia. It seeks improvements through action in the U.S. and Latin America.

The Campaign pressures cut flower producers to respect and improve working conditions and health protections, and pressure U.S. retailers to demand change from their suppliers. The Campaign also works directly with partner organizations and flower workers in Colombia and Ecuador to educate workers about their rights under the labor code and provide legal advice services for workers and assistance in filing complaints regarding unfair dismissals and discrimination.

ILRF's Fairness in Flowers Campaign is urging major U.S. flower retailers such as Albertson's, Safeway, Costco, and Wal-Mart, to pressure their suppliers to respect the rights of their workers by complying with a list of health and labor standards. **ILRF is asking its constituents to send letters to Dole Fresh Flowers and Splendor Flowers asking them to respect workers' rights to freely associate and form a union. The ILRF campaign also urges concerned people to send letters to Dole and major U.S. flower retailers such as Albertson's, Safeway, Costco, and Wal-Mart to pressure their suppliers to respect the rights of their workers by complying with certain standards.**

To participate for Valentine's Day and beyond and to learn more about the ILRF Fairness in Flowers Campaign, visit their web site: <http://www.laborrights.org/>.

Purchase Flowers from Local Farmers Markets

An alternative to purchasing flowers that have been grown in Ecuador and Columbia is to purchase flowers from your local farmers market. These flowers are locally grown and are often organically grown, as well. By purchasing these flowers, you are supporting the local economy, and your money will support the livelihood of a small farmer rather than add to the coffers of a multinational corporation.

If you choose to send a loved one flowers from a farmers market for Valentine's Day, you may want to include a note that explains your reasons for doing so. In this way, you give the gift of education—as well as beauty—to your valentine.

The Flower Industry: Study Guide 3

Women Flower Workers and International Trade

Communicating your concerns to major U.S. retailers of flowers is one step forward. However, it is very important to take a closer look at this issue. What international structures are in place that allow U.S. citizens to profit from the sweat and toil of our neighbors to the South? To answer this question, we must examine the global system of trade and in particular, free trade agreements.

One free trade agreement that has been in the news recently is the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The FTAA is a regional free trade agreement that seeks to progressively eliminate barriers--domestic laws, tariffs, quotas--to trade and investment in North and South America. Negotiations of the terms of this agreement are scheduled to be completed by 2005, and the agreement is planned to go into effect in January, 2006.

Some of the main barriers to free trade are domestic regulations—national, state and local laws; therefore, trade agreements such as the FTAA necessarily seek to limit and reduce all domestic regulations that might impede free trade.

For example, the women flower workers are being denied basic labor rights. Furthermore, serious damage is being done to the environment. However, even if domestic laws in Ecuador and Columbia proscribe certain labor and environmental standards, free trade agreements such as the FTAA threaten to nullify these national laws if they are thought to impede trade. In this way, free trade agreements place commerce and profit before people and the environment, and they overrule national concerns.

Many citizens are unaware of this power residing in trade agreements. Democracy is being eroded in several ways: First, citizens are neither informed nor asked to participate in decisions on trade policy that will affect their daily lives, and secondly, a community's values or decisions as expressed in domestic regulation can be nullified by an unknown panel in a distant organization that oversees the regional and global trading systems.

The same trade rules that make it easy for U.S. companies to import cut flowers from Colombia and Ecuador also allow U.S. companies to easily export hazardous pesticides. U.S. companies are allowed to produce and export both banned and never-registered pesticides to any other country, as long as they are labeled "unregistered." U.S. corporations will benefit from the FTAA and other regional agreements

because such agreements allow them to exploit unprotected workers and also dump products that could not be sold in the U.S. In trade agreements such as the FTAA, the only winners are large corporations.

Trade agreements have significant impacts on our lives and the lives of our sisters and brothers around the world. Trade has the potential to bring many benefits to women depending on how it is structured. Women workers need trade policies that protect their rights as women and as workers and improve their living conditions. The jobs created by current trade policies do not represent hope for the women themselves, nor their children; in such jobs, they can never work their way out of poverty.

We can do better than this. We can demand that our governments create an agreement that will promote healthy communities and will especially work for gender equality. Women and men around the world are organizing and mobilizing for fair trade alternatives to the FTAA. Here are some ideas for how we can act to make the change we know is possible:

1. Learn and read more about the FTAA. To begin the process, read the Alternatives for the Americas (go to Alliance for Responsible Trade: <http://www.art-us.org>). You can also visit the following web sites:

International Gender and Trade Network, <http://www.ignn.org>
Center of Concern - Global Women's Project, <http://www.coc.org>

2. Join a local or national organization or campaign that works to promote fair trade policies.

3. Educate your Members of Congress : Members of Congress will be eventually asked to vote on the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and are currently voting on a number of smaller trade bills. Contact them to tell them that you want trade policies that are fair and that take into account the needs of women. To find the contact information for your Representatives, go to <http://www.house.gov>.

4. Contact the United States Trade Representative: The United States Trade Representative (USTR) is the government office responsible for negotiating all of the U.S. trade agreements. Contact them and let them know what you want included in the FTAA and all future trade agreements. You can find their contact information at <http://www.ustr.gov>.

The Flower Industry: Study Guide 4

Reflection

"It is evident that the principle of free trade, by itself, is no longer adequate for regulating international agreements. It certainly can work when both parties are about equal economically; in such cases it stimulates progress and rewards effort. That is why industrially developed nations see an element of justice in this principle. But the case is quite different when the nations involved are far from equal . . . [T]rade relations can no longer be based solely on the principle of free, unchecked competition, for it very often creates an economic dictatorship. Free trade can be called just only when it conforms to the demands of social justice."

Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, #58-59

*Mary, Mother of us all,
You toiled daily to provide food, water, love and
care for your family.
Bless all the women of the world who face an
unjust economic order as they struggle today to
feed their children, to provide warmth and
comfort, to bring hope and peace to the world.
Help us to grow in understanding of their plight,
help us to grow in solidarity with them,
help us to work for economic justice.
Hear our call for just systems that support all
women, men, and children in your human family.
Amen.*

Discussion Questions

List some of the violations of workers' rights that you read about in the case study of Petrona and Soledad, as well as in the statistics. How does gender impact on the situation?

How can we find news stories and articles that deal with issues related to the case study of Petrona and Soledad and to other urgent problems related to labor rights and trade in the Americas?

Why, in terms of our faith, is it important to know about the situations of these women?

Women support and maintain their families and households. This "invisible," yet highly important work, is rarely taken into consideration by economists and government policy makers. How might the women's working conditions in the flower industry effect them and their families? How might they effect the national economy?

How does trade impact workers? How are women being impacted differently than men? How can trade policy help to rectify the social inequities that exist in countries worldwide instead of reinforce them?

If we are to be good global neighbors, a critical question we must ask is, "Who benefits from the international trading system as it now functions?" We must also ask, "Who will benefit from the FTAA?" Why are such questions important in terms of Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching?

There are many advertisements in which we see images of women delightedly receiving flowers from loved ones. What would be your reaction to an advertisement that instead showed images of tired, sickly women working long hours in unsafe working conditions for the flower industry?

Case Study: Child Slaves on Cocoa Bean Farms

Aly Diabate was almost 12 when a slave trader promised him a bicycle and \$150 a year to help support his poor parents in Mali. He was then placed on a farm and worked for a year and a half for a cocoa farmer who is known as "Le Gros" (the Big Man), but he said his only rewards were the rare days when Le Gros' overseers or older slaves didn't flog him with a bicycle chain or branches from a cacao tree. Aly said he doesn't know what the beans from the cacao tree taste like after they've been processed and blended with sugar, milk and other ingredients. He has never tasted chocolate.

Aly was barely 4 feet tall when he was taken into slavery, and he had a hard time carrying the heavy bags of cocoa beans. "Some of the bags were taller than me," he said. "It took two people to put the bag on my head. And when you didn't hurry, you were beaten." He was beaten more than the other boys were. The scars on his back, right shoulder and left arm are still visible.

Aly Diabate and 18 other boys labored on Le Gros' 494-acre farm, very large by Ivory Coast standards, in the south western part of the country. Their days began when the sun rose, which at this time of year in Ivory Coast is a few minutes after 6 a.m., and they finished work at about 6:30 p.m. They trudged home to a dinner of burned bananas. If they were lucky, they were treated to yams seasoned with saltwater "gravy." After dinner, the boys were ordered into a

24-by-20-foot room, where they slept on wooden planks without mattresses. The only window was covered with hardened mud except for a baseball-size hole to let some air in. "Once we entered the room, nobody was allowed to go out," said Mamadou Traore, a thin, frail youth with serious brown eyes who is 19 now. "Le Gros gave us cans to urinate in. He locked the door and kept the key."

"We thought we had been sold by the trader, but we weren't sure." The boys became sure one day when Le Gros said, "I bought each of you for 25,000 francs (about \$35), so you have to work harder to reimburse me." At night, Aly had nightmares about working forever in the fields, about dying and nobody noticing. To drown these thoughts out, he replayed his memories of growing up in Mali, over and over again. "I was always thinking about my parents and how I could get back to my country," he said. But he didn't think about trying to escape. "I was afraid," he said, his voice as faint as the scars on his skinny body. "I had seen others who tried to escape. When they tried they were severely beaten."

Finally one boy successfully escaped and told elders in the local village what was happening, police freed the boys and sent them back to their villages in Mali. Le Gros was charged with assault against children and suppressing the liberty of people. But such abuses continue on other farms, but large and small farms alike.

Source: "How your Chocolate May be Tainted," Knight Ridder News Service, By Sumana Chatterjee and Sudarsan Raghavan, June 25, 2001

Chocolate: Study Guide 1

If you knew the origin of your chocolate, it probably wouldn't taste so sweet.

- West Africa has been the center of world cocoa cultivation for the last sixty years, today producing over 67% of the world's crop. Ivory Coast is another giant in world production—it now holds 43% of the market.

Child Laborers

- In 2000 and again in 2003, the U.S. State Department and the International Labor Organization (ILO) reported child slavery in the Ivory Coast.
- The 2003 State Department report said that 109,000 children are still working in the Ivory Coast, despite the outcry in 2000 by rights organizations which resulted in new congressional protocol for the industry. Many of these children work on cocoa farms in hazardous tasks such as using machetes and applying pesticides and insecticides without the necessary protective equipment, according to a report by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). The report also said that thousands of children working on cocoa farms had no relatives in the area, suggesting that they were trafficked as slaves.
- These child laborers and child slaves do much of the arduous work of picking the cocoa pods, slicing them open, and then scooping out the cocoa beans. The child slaves come from countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Togo — nations that are even more destitute than the impoverished Ivory Coast.
- Parents in these countries unknowingly give their children to traffickers believing that they will find honest work once they arrive in Ivory Coast and then send their earnings home. But as soon as they are separated from their families, the young boys are made to work for nothing.
- Whether used as slaves or paid, children working on cocoa farms are not likely to be going to school as other children their age. The IITA report noted that only 34% of children working on cocoa farms in the Ivory Coast were attending school, while 64% of those not working on cocoa farms were in school. Essentially, one's chances of getting an education are cut in half when they come to work on a cocoa farm. The IITA study also reported that

64% of children on cocoa farms were under the age of 14, meaning that the loss of an education comes at an early age for the majority of children on cocoa farms.

Poverty

- Growers face extreme poverty and are unable to meet their basic needs.
- An August 2002 International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) report revealed that average annual earnings from cocoa farming range from \$30 to \$110 per member of household.
- Mana Osei Yawu III, Chief of Niveneso Village in Ghana has said, "We had no water in the village, we just had dirty water from rivers and streams. People spent a lot of time collecting water and there was always someone who was sick. The money we used to get from selling our cocoa beans to the government didn't give us enough to buy materials or a pump for our own water supply."
- These facts were clearly stated in the August 2002 IITA report: "Interviews with community leaders indicated that the greater employment of family labor was a common response to the recent drop in cocoa prices and the crisis in cocoa incomes. In addition to the substitution of family labor for paid labor, farmers have also reduced the use of purchased inputs. The net effect of both of these factors has led to lower productivity and incomes, and, perhaps most importantly, to reduced household investments in children's education."
- These small farmers and their children remained trapped in a cycle of poverty, without hope for sufficient income or access to basic education or health care. Thus, poverty is a major factor contributor to slave labor.

Other Facts about Chocolate

- America is the world's largest chocolate consumer. In 2000, the U.S. imported 729,000 tons of cocoa beans and processed products, ate 3.3 billion pounds of chocolate, and spent \$13 billion on it. Although U.S. chocolate manufacturers have often said they cannot be held responsible for conditions on cocoa farms they do not own, market power is significant. Hershey's and M&M/Mars control two-thirds of the U.S. chocolate candy market.
- The six largest cocoa producing countries are the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria, Brazil and Cameroon.
- 90% of the world's cocoa is grown on small family farms of 12 acres or less.

*A poor man's field may produce abundant food,
but injustice sweeps it away.*

Proverbs 13:23

Cocoa Industry Information Sources: UNICEF; IITA; "How your Chocolate May be Tainted," Knight Ridder News Service, By Sumana Chatterjee and Sudarsan Raghavan, June 25, 2001; Global Exchange; *Food, Inc. Corporate concentration from farm to consumer*, UK Food Group, Bill Vorley



Chocolate: Study Guide 2

Corporate Concentration and Impoverished Farmers

The Global Situation

Severe poverty, child labor, and the reemergence of child slavery can be blamed, in part, by raw cocoa prices that are too low to provide farmers with enough income to meet their production costs, much less their basic needs. Producer countries, led by the Ivory Coast, are pressing for manufacturers to pay more, saying that it is the only way to prevent poverty-stricken cocoa farmers from using forced labor.

- A World Bank Report (Morisset, 1997) estimated that gap between producer prices and consumer prices may have cost commodity-exporting countries (such as those that export cocoa beans) more than \$100 billion a year.
- According to the European Fair Trade Association, farmers get barely 5 percent of the profit from chocolate, whereas trading organization and the chocolate industry receive about 70 percent. This means that producers get only 5 cents from every dollar spent on chocolate, while the companies get 70 cents—14 times more!

There is an accelerating trend around the world toward concentration of market power in the hands of fewer, larger companies. Especially in food production today, this is true among transnational agro-food companies, which control the way food is produced and how it is distributed, according to their goal of maximum profit. As corporate control increases at each stage of the food production chain, independent farmers and consumers become ever more vulnerable to the economic might of these companies.

Cocoa processing is fairly concentrated, with four companies (Cargill, ADM, Barry Callebaut and Hosta) controlling around 40% of cocoa grinding. Their % control of the global market is big enough to provide price leadership, while small cocoa beans farmers have no say in the matter. In other words, these four companies are setting the low price of cocoa; as their profits skyrocket, cocoa farmers toil in poverty.

The burden of Debt owed to international institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) has left small farmers in an even weaker position, placing them at the mercy of the volatile world market, without any supports or safety nets (border measures, price supports, production subsidies and access to credit), which are often forbidden according to the terms of their loans.

Discussion Questions

Greater and greater concentration of market power in the hands of fewer, larger companies means that a relatively small number of people are making decisions that effect millions of others. Catholic Social Teaching states that democratic participation in decision making is the best way to respect the dignity and liberty of people. How does corporate concentration in the food system undermine democracy, human dignity and freedom?

How might the price decisions of a handful of cocoa processing corporations negatively effect the development of entire communities? How might these decisions effect national economies?

Catholic Social Teaching emphasizes the transformation of unjust structures and systems? What are some of the challenges to transforming the global food system to benefit people throughout the world?

How can you become a more conscious and conscientious consumer and a more aware citizen in order to bring about positive changes in the food system? (Be specific and give examples.)

Educate Yourself

Learn more about the role of agribusiness in the global food system. Visit the following web sites for more information:

The Agribusiness Accountability Initiative
[<http://www.ncrlc.com/>]

National Catholic Rural Life Conference
[<http://www.ncrlc.com/>]

Chocolate: Study Guide 3

Corporate Concentration and Impoverished Farmers

The Situation in the United States

For years, US chocolate manufacturers have said they are not responsible for the conditions on cocoa plantations since they don't own them. **But the \$13 billion chocolate industry is heavily consolidated, with just two firms—Hershey's and M&M/Mars—controlling two-thirds of the U.S. chocolate candy market.** This means that if these global corporations really wanted to reform problems in the supply chain, they have the power and the ability to do so.

In 2001, the chocolate industry finally stopped denying responsibility for the problems in West Africa after a string of media exposés and the threat of government action jeopardized their image and business-as-usual. In November 2001, the U.S. chocolate industry announced, in a Joint Statement with the International Union of Foodworkers, the International Labor Organization (ILO), Free the Slaves, and the Child Labor Coalition, to establish a joint foundation to oversee and sustain efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor (see ILO Convention 182) and forced labor (see ILO Convention 29) in the growing and processing of cocoa beans and their derivative products.

However, this plan does not address the basic issue of prices for small farmers. Without such a guarantee, there is now way to ensure that child slavery and poverty are brought to an end for good.

As a consumer, you vote with the dollars you spend on one product over another. The more you learn about the consequences of your purchasing choices, the more you can use your buying power to reward companies that are socially and environmentally responsible.

Global Exchange and Fair Trade Chocolate:

Global Exchange is an international human rights organization dedicated to promoting political, social and environmental justice globally. The organization promotes Fair Trade Chocolate as a way to correct the economic imbalances of the cocoa system.

Fair Trade is an international system of monitoring and certification to guarantee that poor producers are paid a fair price for their harvests. Monitoring agencies from importing countries collaborate with diverse networks of cooperatives from producing countries to create a humane trading system that benefits people and the environment. The Fair Trade system guarantees that farmers receive at least \$.80/pound (or \$150 per metric ton above the world price if the world price rises above \$.80/pound), giving them the stable and sufficient income they need to support their families with dignity. Fair Trade prohibits abusive child labor and forced labor. Farms are monitored once per year to ensure that all conditions are met.

Global Exchange's cocoa campaign is focused on building support for Fair Trade chocolate among consumers and retailers, and pressuring large companies like Mars, Inc. (maker of M&M's, Snickers, and Milky Way) to take immediate steps to end child slavery and poverty wages by committing to purchase at least five percent of their cocoa as Fair Trade Certified.

Visit the Gloal Exchange Web Site, www.globalexchange.org, for more information on Fair Trade Chocolate. Their web site has excellent resources including a downloadable "Updated Action Pack for Fair Trade Coffee and Chocolate Campaigns" that includes fact sheets, background information, steps to organizing a Fair Trade Chocolate campaign, sample letters to store managers, steps to switching school/organization fundraisers to fair trade chocolate, steps to passing a fair trade purchasing resolution in your city, county and/or college, steps to organizing a educational event, and tips for writing effective letters to the editor.

Chocolate: Study Guide 4

Reflection

It is imperative that no one . . . would indulge in a merely individualistic morality. The best way to fulfill one's obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one's means and the needs of others, and also to promote and help public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life.

Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, #30

Consequently, the promotion of justice is at the heart of a true culture of solidarity. It is not just a question of giving one's surplus to those in need, but helping entire peoples presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. For this to happen, it is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of lifestyles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies.

Pope John Paul II, 2001 World Day of Peace Message

Discussion Questions

What kind of life awaits those children born into families of cocoa bean farmers? What are some of the challenges that they are up against? Are you able to imagine a way in which they might overcome some of the difficulties in their lives? What about those children who forced into slavery? How can we help these children?

U.S. culture strongly promotes individuality, the idea of "looking out for yourself," and the concept of "getting ahead." However, Catholic Social Teaching warns us against such an "individualistic morality," and instead teaches us to work for the common good. How can you, as an individual and a group, begin to hold the promotion of the common good as a governing factor in your daily decisions?

Prayer for a World Renewed

O God,
our creator and sustainer,
we pray to you:
We want to celebrate life.

We cry out against all that kills life:
hunger, poverty, unemployment, sickness,
debt, repression, individualism,
abuse of the earth, injustice,
and all other forms of slavery.

We want to announce fullness of life:
work, education, health, housing,
safe environment, bread for all.

We want communion, solidarity,
a world renewed.
We hope against hope.
With the God of history,
We want to make things new again.
Amen.

Case Study: Diamonds and Sierra Leone

Beginning in 1991, a bloody battle in this African nation of Sierra Leone began with the rebel group Revolutionary United Front (RUF) brutally taking over the nation's prosperous diamond mines. The rebel RUF forces carried out a brutal military campaign in which they mutilated some 20,000 people, hacking off their arms, legs, lips, and ears with machetes and axes. The rebels enslaved the local populations, forcing them to either work to dig up diamonds or recruited them as soldiers in their bloody war. Rape was also a weapon of choice, and women suffered greatly.

According to a CNN report, the RUF abducted over 300 children to be used as snipers, porters, diamond mine diggers and sex workers, feeding these children drugs to numb the fear and pain and keep them active in the rebel groups' fight for control of the diamond fields. The war in Sierra Leone ended officially in January 2002; however the peace is still not final.

In April 2001, when Jusu Lahia was 15 years old, he was wounded by an exploding rocket-propelled grenade. A child-soldier in Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Lahia was one of thousands of victims of a war fought for control of one of the world's most precious commodities: a fortune in raw diamonds that have made their way from the deadly jungles of Sierra Leone onto the rings and necklaces of happy lovers the world over.

When Lahia sprawled to the earth—shards of hot metal ripped his body from face to groin, destroying his left eye—few who eventually wore the gems he fought over could even locate Sierra Leone on a map. Lahia was carried to a bare, fire-blackened hospital room in Kailahun, the RUF's stronghold in the area, and dumped on a pile of hay that served as a bed. Powerless to treat him, the RUF field medics simply taped his wounds shut and left him wracked with sweats and shivers. In this blood-stained room, Lahia laid dying of a tetanus infection, next to another felled 15 year-old.

. . . and the cause of this suffering: diamonds

Source: Amnesty International USA, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/amnestynow/diamonds.html>

Conflict Diamonds: Study Guide 1

To many people, diamonds symbolize love, happiness or wealth.

But to many other people, diamonds mean horror, violence and poverty.

Introduction

Diamonds derive their unique value from consumers' association of the gem with love and commitment. However, the international trade in diamonds has enriched and empowered some of the cruelest fighting forces in the world. Increasingly, diamonds are associated not with love and commitment but with rape, conflict and amputation.

What are conflict diamonds?

Conflict diamonds are diamonds used by insurgent groups to finance conflict and carry out atrocities against innocent civilians, or they are sources of funds for unscrupulous governments who are equally brutal. In addition, concerns have mounted over links between conflict diamonds and money laundering by groups like Al-Queda since the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Diamonds in Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have fueled and funded civil war and gross human rights abuses against the civilian population. Rebel armies, nation states, warlords, arms dealers and unscrupulous traders have taken advantage of the high value and small size of diamonds—and of the complete absence of any form of international trade regulation—in order to make millions of dollars. In the process, they have also helped to take millions of lives and to destroy entire communities.

What is the percentage of conflict diamonds that are on the market?

There are no exact statistics. The diamond industry estimates 4%, but consumer advocates believe that conflict diamonds make up as much as 10-15% of the world's diamond supply. Once diamonds are brought to market, their origin is difficult to trace and once polished, they can no longer be identified.

It is vitally important that the trade in diamonds be reformed quickly.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme

In January 2003, the Kimberley Process, an international diamond certification system, was introduced to eradicate the trade in conflict diamonds.

This process makes it illegal to trade in conflict diamonds. Under the process' rules, all shipments of rough diamonds to and from signatory countries will now have Kimberley Process Certificates issued by participating governments, guaranteeing them as "conflict-free." Additionally, all participating governments will aim to maintain import and export statistics for rough diamonds.

On July 31, 2003, 40 countries, including the United States, were officially accepted as participating countries to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. A process of voluntary review was adopted by these countries. The system so far has not included provisions for regular, mandatory monitoring to ensure that actions taken by government and industry work in practice. Such a scheme cannot guarantee that conflict diamonds will not enter the supply chain.

Consumer support could make the difference in making sure that governments and the diamond trade agree to impartial verification of the process.

Conflict Diamond Information Sources: ActionAid, United Nations, The Campaign to Eliminate Conflict Diamonds, http://www.phrusa.org/campaigns/sierra_leone/conflict_diamonds.html, <http://www.seekjustice.org>, Amnesty International

Conflict Diamonds: Study Guide 2

Discussion Questions

Why did the diamond industry, aware of the conflicts caused by the diamond trade, do nothing about it for many years?

Do the bloody conflicts in Africa affect us here in the United States? How do they affect the global community?

We are called to be peacemakers, and we know that reform of the diamond industry is essential to the establishment of justice and peace in some of the conflict-ridden areas of Africa. Look at the suggestions for action, located in the right-hand column of the page.

*God of Justice and Peace,
Mold our consciences according to justice,
And shape our hearts according to peace,
That we may recognize the talents
that you have given us
to secure the rights of the poor, the oppressed,
the sick and the marginalized.
God, we are Your children.
Grant us the courage and strength to work
for justice, and in this way, live out our
call to be peacemakers.*

Amen.

Suggestions for Action

Americans purchase 65% of the world's gem quality diamonds; because of this, Americans have the market power to stop conflict diamonds.

1. Find out if there are any groups in your area that are involved in the issue of conflict diamonds. You may want to check out Amnesty International [<http://www.amnestyusa.org>] and/or Free the Children [<http://www.freethechildren.org/>]. Ask a representative to come speak to your group about the problem. Find out what you and/or your group can do to help support them.
2. Let your legislative representatives know of the importance you place on impartial, regular monitoring of all countries participating in the Kimberley Process in order to deliver a system that can guarantee conflict-free diamonds to buyers.
3. Consider writing to your local jewelers. Ask if they can certify that their diamonds do not support conflict and corrupt regimes. This will pressure the industry to fully comply with the Kimberly Process and to develop and enforce their own independent monitoring system. Because you are potential customer, they care about what you think, so let them know.
4. Ask to see a Kimberley Process Certificate before buying a diamond.
5. To celebrate Valentine's Day, show your love for our brothers and sisters in Africa by educating others about conflict diamonds.